



El Paso, Texas

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics¹

- Population: 563,662 (2000 Census); 515,342 (1990 Census)
- Race/Ethnicity (2000): 75.9% white; 3.2% black/African American; 0.8% American Indian/Alaska Native; 1.2% Asian; 0.1% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander; 18.8% other; 3.5% two or more races; 79.3% Hispanic (of any race)
- County: El Paso

Politics²

- Mayor: Raymond Caballero
- City Council (Districts 1-8): Jan Sumrall, Rose Rodriguez, Larry Medina, John Cook, Daniel Power, Paul J. Escobar, Luis Sarinana, and Anthony Cobos
- Chief of Police: Carlos Leon

Programs/Initiatives

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program grantee awarded funding by ONDCP in conjunction with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP):³
 - **FY 2001** \$100,000 to the R.E. Thomason General Hospital/Rio Grande Safe Communities Coalition, El Paso. This large, bi-national and tri-State community coalition includes community based organizations, law enforcement, and governmental agencies from El Paso, Ciudad Juarez (Mexico), and Las Cruces (New Mexico).
 - **FY 1999** \$100,000 to the West Texas Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, El Paso. The Chamizal Community Coalition serves the South Central area of El Paso where 52 percent of the population is under the age of 25. The project will target marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, heroin, and cocaine use and abuse.
- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)⁴
 - Designated in 1990, the Southwest Border HIDTA is currently located in El Paso. This HIDTA implements border-wide initiatives and coordinates five regional partnerships (two of which are located in Texas) along the Southwest Border. This HIDTA is responsible for counties within Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas.
 - Also designated in 1990, the Southwest Border HIDTA/West Texas Partnership is responsible for the following Texas counties: El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Reeves, Pecos, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, and Terrell.

Drugs

- According to the El Paso epidemiologic source, powder cocaine and heroin are both cheaper and more abundant on the American side of the border than on the Mexican side of the border. This is leading to an increase in people from Mexico crossing over the border to buy the drugs in El Paso. The dramatic price drop in El Paso powder

cocaine and heroin (from \$10 to \$3 a “hit”) is a result of competition for the market by three different cartels.⁵

➤ Cocaine⁶

According to an El Paso epidemiologic source, crack has replaced heroin as the drug that causes the most serious consequences. This drug is sold in central city and rural areas of El Paso. Young adults (age 18-30) are the age group most likely to use crack cocaine in this city. Powder cocaine is considered to be widely available in El Paso. According to an El Paso treatment source, powder cocaine users are likely to either smoke or inject the drug.

➤ Heroin

The DEA in El Paso reported that heroin purchased in this city during 2000 is an average of 50.8% pure.⁷ Heroin use is spreading to the rural areas surrounding El Paso. While injection is the most common form of heroin administration, snorting has increased in El Paso. Mexican brown and black tar heroin are the predominant forms of heroin available in El Paso.⁸

➤ Marijuana⁹

Marijuana is considered to be widely available in El Paso. Mexican commercial-grade marijuana is the predominant form of marijuana available in El Paso. Adolescents (13-17 years old) are the most likely age group to use marijuana in this city. The El Paso treatment source reports that some dealers lace marijuana with heroin or cocaine, but that the users are not aware of this practice until they are tested at the clinic.

➤ Methamphetamine¹⁰

El Paso sources indicate that most of the methamphetamine available in El Paso is produced in “box labs,” which are small, mobile, clandestine labs often located in rural areas. According to an El Paso treatment source, problems associated with methamphetamine intensified during spring 2001. Young adults (age 18-30) are the group most likely to use methamphetamine in El Paso.

➤ Other Drugs¹¹

- Problems associated with ecstasy and other club drugs intensified in El Paso during spring 2001.
- Rohypnol is considered to be somewhat available in El Paso. This drug is sometimes used with heroin and powder cocaine (a speedball) to “soften the fall when users are coming down from the high.”

- During 2000, 38.6% of adults in the Upper Rio Grande region (which includes El Paso) reported using an illicit drug at least once during their lifetime.¹²

Percent of Adults Reporting Drug Use, Upper Rio Grande Region, 2000

Drug	Past month use	Past year use*	Ever used
Marijuana	4.3%	2.3%	35.9%
Inhalants	0.2	0.5	2.4
Cocaine	0.5	0.5	11.3
Crack	0.2	0.0	1.8
Uppers	1.0	0.5	10.6
Downers	0.3	1.2	4.0
Heroin	0.0	0.0	2.1
Other opiates	0.0	0.5	2.8
Psychedelics	1.8	1.5	11.1
Any Illicit Drug	5.4	3.2	38.6

* Does not include past month data

Crime and Drug-Related Crime

- During 2001, there were 21 homicides known to the police in El Paso.¹³

Number of Offenses Known to Police, El Paso, 2000 and 2001

Offense	2000	2001	% Change
Criminal homicide	20	21	5.0%
Sexual assault	188	203	8.0
Robbery	731	775	6.0
Assault (all)	13750	14760	7.3
Burglary	2228	2553	14.6
Larceny/theft	25605	22039	-13.9
Motor vehicle theft	2442	1836	-24.8
Total Index I Offenses	44964	42187	-6.2

- During 2000, there were 3,496 drug possession arrests in El Paso County.¹⁴

Number of Drug Arrests, El Paso County, 1997-2000

Offense Type	1997	1998	1999	2000
Trafficking, all drugs	90	106	87	166
Possession, all drugs	3,279	3,173	3,421	3,496
Trafficking, marijuana	59	48	55	134
Possession, marijuana	2,075	1,950	2,161	2,315
All drug offenses	3,369	3,279	3,508	3,662

Juveniles

- During 2000, 12.9% of elementary school students along the Texas border (including El Paso) reported using inhalants at least once during their lifetime.¹⁵

Percent of Elementary School Students Reporting Drug Use, Texas Border, 2000

Drug Type and Grade	Used in School Year	Used in Lifetime
Inhalants	9.5%	12.9%
Grade 4	7.9	10.7
Grade 5	8.4	11.5
Grade 6	12.3	16.6
Marijuana	1.9	2.6
Grade 4	0.7	0.9
Grade 5	1.0	1.6
Grade 6	4.2	5.4

- Among Texas border students in grades 7-12, approximately 32% reported using an illicit drug at least once during their lifetime.¹⁶

Percent of Secondary School Students Reporting Drug Use, Texas Border, 1998 and 2000

Drug Type	Past Month Use		Ever Used	
	1998	2000	1998	2000
Any illicit drug	15.6%	15.6%	33.3%	32.5%
Inhalants	8.9	8.8	21.0	20.6
Marijuana	12.7	12.7	30.2	28.9
Cocaine/crack	6.0	5.7	13.7	13.8
Hallucinogens	1.4	1.0	4.0	3.3
Uppers	2.8	2.3	7.1	6.0
Downers	3.0	2.4	7.7	6.2
Rohypnol	5.0	4.2	13.4	12.6
Steroids	0.6	0.8	1.8	2.3
Ecstasy	0.7	1.5	2.1	3.5
Heroin	0.6	0.6	1.9	1.6

Enforcement

- Southwest Border HIDTA/West Texas Partnership Initiatives include:¹⁷
 - El Paso Multi-Agency Task Force: This task force identifies and targets the highest levels of major drug trafficking organizations using the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez corridor as a staging point for the distribution of narcotics throughout the United States.
 - Operation Hijack: This task force targets high-level bulk drug transportation organizations who exploit the international El Paso/Ciudad Juarez air and land corridor of entry by transporting drugs from Mexico into designated hubs of distribution in the United States.

- Stash House Initiative¹⁸
Due to El Paso's proximity to the Mexican Border, several drug trafficking organizations are attempting to set up "stash houses" in El Paso and surrounding areas to store large quantities of illegal drugs. These drugs are temporarily stored at these houses for the purpose of repackaging and to facilitate distribution to other cities throughout the United States. The El Paso Police Department works in conjunction with other West Texas Partnership (HIDTA) agencies on this task force.
- As of October 31, 2000, there were 1,392 full-time law enforcement employees in El Paso.¹⁹

Trafficking and Seizures

- El Paso sources indicate that some individuals who regularly travel by bus between Los Angeles and El Paso for personal reasons also transport crack between the two cities. This results in some of El Paso's crack supply coming from California and not Mexico.²⁰
- The geographic area that comprises the West Texas Partnership adjoins 490 miles of international border including five of the busiest Ports of Entry (POE) on any US border.²¹
- The El Paso International Airport, Interstate-10, which accesses both coasts, and rail companies are exploited by narcotics entrepreneurs. An extensively interconnected commercial and social infrastructure in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico provide drug trafficking organizations with innumerable methods of "masking" their illicit trade.²²
- El Paso is a hub for illicit drug distribution and money laundering systems.²³
- Marijuana seizures along the El Paso border continue to be among the largest in the country. Heroin seizures also continue to grow.²⁴
- Cocaine was identified in 41.6% of the 2,551 items reported to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) laboratory in El Paso during 2000.²⁵

Drugs Involved in DPS Cases, Selected Drugs, El Paso, 2000

Drug Involved	Percent
Cocaine	41.6
Cannabis	39.5
Heroin	6.2
Clonazepam	3.7
Methamphetamine	2.7
Diazepam	1.0
Psilocybin	0.7
MDMA	0.7

Courts²⁶

- As of January 17, 2002, there were two drug courts in El Paso that had recently been implemented and there is an additional drug court being planned in the city.

Treatment²⁷

- During 2000, there were 540 adult admissions to treatment for heroin in El Paso County.

Number of Admissions to Treatment, El Paso County, 2000

Drug Type	Juveniles	Adults
Alcohol	52	493
Amphetamines	--	12
Cocaine	12	171
Crack	--	110
Downers	--	7
Heroin	--	540
Marijuana/hashish	247	76
Other drugs	5	8
Other opiates	--	7
Inhalants	8	--

Consequences of Use²⁸

- There were 77 drug-related deaths in El Paso County in 2000.

Number of Adult Drug-Related Deaths, El Paso County, 1998-2000

	1998	1999	2000
Total drug-related	70	78	77
Direct drug-related	60	66	65
Indirect drug-related	10	12	12

Sources

¹ U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov>

² El Paso Web site: <http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/index.htm>

³ Drug-Free Communities Web site: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/dfcs/grantee/01grantees.html>

⁴ Southwest Border HIDTA/West Texas Partnership Fact Sheet:

http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/hidta/frames_wtex.html

⁵ Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Pulse Check: Trends in Drug Abuse*, November 2001:

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/drugfact/pulsechk/fall2001/index.html>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *Substance Abuse Trends in Texas*, June 2001:

<http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/trends/june2001.pdf>

⁸ Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Pulse Check: Trends in Drug Abuse*, November 2001:

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/drugfact/pulsechk/fall2001/index.html>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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- ¹² Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *2000 Texas Survey of Substance Use Among Adults*: <http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/AdultHousehold.pdf>
- ¹³ El Paso Police Department, Statistics: http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/eppdstat_ucr.htm
- ¹⁴ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Substance-Related Statistics by County: <http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/statistics/ctysearch.html>
- ¹⁵ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *Texas School Survey of Substance Use Among Students: Grades 4-6, 2000*, June 2001: http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/school_elementary2000.pdf
- ¹⁶ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *Texas School Survey of Substance Use Among Students: Grades 7-12, 2000*, May 2001: http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/school_survey2000.pdf
- ¹⁷ Southwest Border HIDTA/West Texas Partnership Fact Sheet: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/hidta/frames_wtex.html
- ¹⁸ El Paso Police Department Web site, Stash House Initiative: http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/eppdpi_shi.htm
- ¹⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2000*, October 2001: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/00cius.htm>
- ²⁰ Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Pulse Check: Trends in Drug Abuse*, November 2001: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/drugfact/pulsechk/fall2001/index.html>
- ²¹ Southwest Border HIDTA/West Texas Partnership Fact Sheet: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/hidta/frames_wtex.html
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *Substance Abuse Trends in Texas*, June 2001: <http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/trends/june2001.pdf>
- ²⁶ OJP Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project, *Summary of Drug Court Activity by State and County*, January 2002: <http://www.american.edu/spa/justice/publications/drgchart2k.pdf>
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Substance-Related Statistics by County: <http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/research/statistics/ctysearch.html>

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